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DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: LOCAL DEMOCRACY, NIGERIAN STYLE

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (C) Embassy's FSN Political Specialist, who is a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), recently attempted to take part in a local PDP congress in his home town. Such congresses were, on paper, supposed to take place across the country before February 21 to select delegates to attend February 28 state congresses, which, in turn were supposed to choose attendees at the party's March 8 national congress. His experience, recounted below, is instructive as to how things actually work in what styles itself as Africa's largest democratic political party.

12. (SBU) Begin text: "Out of curiosity, last week I decided to exercise my franchise as a registered member of the PDP and attend the Ward congress. The PDP national office had asked its state chapters to conduct congresses at the various levels: Ward, local and state levels. The exercise will eventually terminate at the national level congress on March 8 with the emergence of new party officers.

"Upon reaching my Ward in Sabon Gari, Zaria last weekend, I inquired about preparations for the congress that was expected to be held on Saturday (February 16), but no one seemed to have any idea. Next: I went to the party office but the office was closed. When eventually I ran into one of the PDP bigwigs in my Ward, he laughed when I asked him about the PDP congress. Instead of giving me an answer, he jokingly asked me which of the congresses I was referring to: local government, state or national congress? I insisted on Ward congress. He bursts into another round of mischievous laughter, and this time around, others around him also joined. At the end, he smiled at me and said: 'Don't worry, we have conducted the congress on your behalf to save your time and energy!'

"I was later informed the stakeholders (meaning coterie of local PDP top brass) in the local government had already picked the party officials at the ward and local government levels and, typical of PDP machinery, the consent of other party members like me was not needed to okay such an important party decision. It is important to recall that I have never been invited for any meeting of the party that requires debate or inputs from members. The only invitation I received was during a local fund raising dinner to kick-off the party campaign towards the 2007 general elections.

"This scenario is a sample of what the PDP congresses looked like in all the wards within the local government. Reports

from some states were not different from my ward where 'consensus' was reached by the stakeholders to produce party officials and delegates to state and national congresses. In some states like Delta, as 'consensus' was not arrived at by the key players, the congress ended in a fiasco with accusations and counter accusations by different camps."

13. (C) Comment: As the date for the PDP national congress approaches, various factions of participants are coming forward claiming to represent the forces of democracy within the party. We think it important to remember that most of those in the hall will, at best, have been selected in processes like those in Zaria on February 16, or simply by virtue of being a retainer of one of the PDP "Big Men." End Comment.  
SANDERS